

The National Center for Environmental Assessment
in the Office of Research and Development, U. S. EPA, Washington, DC 20460
– last updated September 10, 2002–

NOTE: Please refer to this web site on a regular basis for it will be updated with new questions and answers during the period of the solicitation as NCEA receives and responds to the questions.

-----UPDATED September 10, 2002 -----

**APPLICATIONS THAT ARE SENT THROUGH U.S. MAIL
MUST BE POSTMARKED BY SEPTEMBER 19, 2002.**

Dave Kelley, NCEA 8623D, US EPA, 1200 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Washington, DC 20460

**APPLICATIONS SENT BY DELIVERY SERVICE (e.g., FedEx, DHL)
MUST BE DATED, OR MARKED RECEIVED BY SEPTEMBER 19, 2002.**

Dave Kelley, NCEA/USEPA, 5th floor, Suite 500, **808** 17th Street NW,
Washington, DC 20006. (Phone: 202-564-3263)

**QUESTIONS FROM POTENTIAL APPLICANTS & EPA'S RESPONSES
in regard to Research Solicitation NCEA-02-05:**

“A Request for Applications for a Cooperative Agreement to
Provide Assistance for Conducting Research to Develop Improved Methods and Approaches to
Empower Communities to Participate More Effectively in Environmental Cleanups”

It is ORD policy to insure that all competitors have equal access to information, so Section 5.5 of the solicitation (NCEA-02-05) provides that questions that are asked by potential applicants shall be posted along with EPA responses on the NCEA website. (Please email additional questions to Dave Kelley at kelley.dave@epa.gov.)

1. Question from potential applicant: Are state agencies, local government departments, or community groups eligible as applicants?

EPA's Response: Eligibility for this solicitation is addressed in Section 4.1 which states “Applicants must be eligible to receive federal assistance under Section 31(b) and (c) of the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA or Superfund). EPA will consider applications from universities and non-profit organizations.” The EPA decided to limit eligibility for the solicitation to universities and non-profit organizations because the Agency determined that organizations of this type are best suited to lead the types of research projects the EPA is interested in for this

solicitation.

2. Question from potential applicant: Can organizations that are not eligible to be a lead applicant (state and local governments, tribal governments, community groups, commercial organizations) be part of a team under the leadership of an eligible a university or non-profit organization?

EPA response: Yes, they can partner under the leadership of an eligible university or non-profit organization. But it is solely the discretion of the eligible lead applicant to select their team members. Team members, subapplicant, or subgrantees/subcontractors technically do not apply for the cooperative agreement-- the university or non-profit is the eligible applicant. EPA has only a legal relationship or "privity" or with the applicant who receives an award and becomes a recipient (40 CFR 30.41). Assuming the team members are subapplicant (a likely scenario with state, tribal or local governments), these team members are accountable to the primary recipient (not EPA) for the proper use of research funds under 40 CFR 30.2(gg). Team members that are commercial organizations must be in compliance with the procurement provisions of 40 CFR 30.43 and 30.45 when they contract with the lead eligible applicant.

Note: The original solicitation contained a typographical error and refers to Section "31(b) and (c)" of CERCLA. Although state and local governments are, as a legal matter, eligible for funding under CERCLA 311(b) and (c) EPA decided to limit eligibility for this solicitation to universities and non profit organizations because the Agency determined that organizations of this type are best suited to lead the types of research projects the EPA is interested in for this solicitation. Under CERCLA 311(b)(3) non profit organizations must also be tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code to be eligible for funding.

3. Questions from potential applicant: Is there any other information available where I can learn more about how long this solicitation has been around? Is this its first offering or has it been up previous years? If it is not new, what types of projects were previously funded?

EPA's Response: This solicitation was announced on June 20, 2002 and responses are due by September 19, 2002. This is a new area of research for NCEA and therefore the first time that this work has been advertised. NCEA purposely chose to use a competitive process for this solicitation in order to encourage open competition among a diverse pool of applicants.

4. Question from potential applicant: Is this funding available only for Superfund sites?

EPA's Response: Since this solicitation is being conducted under Superfund authority then this research must be of primary benefit to the Superfund program. Further, this

research is specifically targeted towards addressing the special needs of a particular type of Superfund site – those with contaminated sediments. This, however, does not mean that research must deal with a contaminated sediment site. Rather, the results of the research must be extractable to contaminated sediment sites and their neighboring communities.

5. Question from potential applicant: Is it EPA's intent to fund people who are actually involved in on-going cleanup efforts or those who would study and evaluate the on-going efforts of others?

EPA's Response: As stated in section 3.1 of the solicitation, "The *primary purpose* of the research solicited by this document is to stimulate scientific research on the general topic of environmental risk communication and community involvement. The *secondary purpose* of the solicitation is to generate insights, methods, tools, and models that might be used to empower communities to participate more effectively in environmental cleanups, especially the cleanup of contaminated sediment sites." Therefore, it is EPA's intent to fund the eligible parties (see Section 4.1) who best meet these goals using the criteria described in Section 5.2. Developing these insights, methods, tools and models may or may not involve working or with an actual Superfund site and its neighboring community.

6. Question from potential applicant: Is this solicitation for a grant?

EPA's Response: No. This solicitation is not for a grant. It is for a cooperative agreement. While both grants and cooperative agreements are types of assistance agreements, cooperative agreements differ from grants in that with cooperative agreements, there must be substantial government (EPA) involvement in the research activities.

7. Question from potential applicant: What does EPA mean by "substantial involvement"?

EPA's Response: As stated in Section 3.2 of the solicitation, "EPA intends to be substantially involved in this project. Applicants should propose the extent and nature of collaboration with EPA that they desire in the proposal. The specifics of who will be involved and in what way they will collaborate will be subject to later negotiations between EPA and the applicant once the award is made and will become part of the official work plan in the cooperative agreement. EPA involvement with the research team could take the form of one or more of the following: (1) collaboration in the design, measurement, analysis, and interpretation of the research activity; (2) collaboration in publishing articles or reports about the research; or (3) technical assistance in carrying out the work under the agreement."

8. Question from potential applicant: Can I talk to you (EPA) about what your role might be in my proposal?

EPA's Response: No. Communication with EPA on such matters is expressly prohibited under Section 5.5 which states "During the period of competition for cooperative agreements, EPA will not provide information that would confer an unfair competitive advantage to the recipient of such information. To reduce both the potential for inadvertent communication of such information, and the appearance of conferring unfair advantage, it is ORD policy to restrict any communication about cooperative agreements undergoing competition to systematic communication that insures that all competitors have equal access to information. In furtherance of this policy, NCEA will only accept written questions for clarification of this solicitation. Questions may be e-mailed to: kelley.dave@epa.gov. Mr. Kelley's full contact information (including mailing and delivery addresses are given below. Questions and responses will be posted on the NCEA's Internet website: <http://www.epa.gov/ncea>."

9. Questions from a potential applicant: We are working with three communities in a part of the country to facilitate community organizing around lead poisoning prevention. Would lead (primarily from deteriorating paint on old housing) fall within what is termed "contaminated sediment sites"? If your answer is yes, we would work with community based organizations to apply for this grant.

EPA Response: Contaminated sediment sites are intended to include those sites that have contaminated saturated soils and other materials that are commonly found at the bottom of streams, rivers, lakes, estuaries, harbors, and oceans, etc. Therefore, lead from deteriorating paint in older buildings would not be considered "contaminated sediments". However, while the primary focus of this research is to develop methods and tools that can be applied to contaminated sediment sites, this does not mean that applicants can only propose research at sediment sites. It is up to the applicant to make the case that lessons learned at other types of sites (such as lead paint sites) can be successfully applied to meet the research needs for contaminated sediment sites. Also note this is a cooperative agreement, not a grant, see # 6 above.

10. Question from potential applicant: The address for direct deliveries (e.g., FedEx, DHL) appears to be incomplete. What is the street address?

EPA's Response: The street address is **808** 17th Street NW. The complete address for deliveries is:

Dave Kelley, NCEA/USEPA, 5th floor, Suite 500, **808** 17th Street NW,
Washington, DC 20006. (Phone: 202-564-3263)

Please contact Dave Kelley at 202-564-3263 if you have any questions or difficulties with your delivery. Note: many delivery services will contact Mr. Kelley directly if his

information is included with the package. If so, Mr. Kelley will provide them detailed instructions.

11. Question from potential applicant: Must applications be received in your office by September 19, 2002, or will you accept an application postmarked by that date?

EPA's Response: The application must be received by EPA personnel by the Close of Business, September 19, 2002.

12. Question from potential applicant: What is the full name and citation for the National Research Council report that is referenced in Section 3.1 of the RFA?

EPA's Response: The full citation of the report is:
NRC (National Research Council). 2001. *A Risk-Management Strategy for PCB-Contaminated Sediments*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
Copies of this report may be ordered from the National Academy Press at 800-624-6242, 202-334-3313, or www.nap.edu

13. Question from potential applicant: With regards to eligibility, I have seen one description of an RFA that would be geared towards minority institutions, but the RFA on your website does not mention this. Are these separate RFAs?

EPA's Response: We are not sure what other RFA you might be referring to, but our RFA is open to all eligible institutions. As was stated in the response to Question # 3 above, NCEA purposely chose to use a competitive process for this solicitation in order to encourage open competition among a diverse pool of applicants.

14. Questions from potential applicant: Does EPA require that this work be targeted towards a specific site? If so, will EPA provide access to the site and site information?

EPA's Response: No, research proposed under this request for applications does not have to be directed towards a specific site. The intent of this application is to stimulate research on developing better methods and models to allow communities to participate more effectively in environmental cleanups. Such research may or may not involve using an actual site to develop or test better approaches. As was explained in Question # 3, the results of the research must be extractable to contaminated sediment sites and their neighboring communities.

15. Question from potential applicant: Could these funds be used as a grant by a community to hire a contractor to represent their interests at public meetings and to encourage their participation during site cleanup activities?

EPA’s Response: No. As stated in the response to Question # 5 above, Section 3.1 of the solicitation, "The *primary purpose* of the research solicited by this document is to stimulate scientific research on the general topic of environmental risk communication and community involvement. The *secondary purpose* of the solicitation is to generate insights, methods, tools, and models that might be used to empower communities to participate more effectively in environmental cleanups, especially the cleanup of contaminated sediment sites." Therefore, it is EPA's intent to fund the eligible parties (see Section 4.1) who best meet these goals using the criteria described in Section 5.2. As was explained in the response to Question # 14 above, developing these insights, methods, tools and models may or may not involve working on or with an actual Superfund site and its neighboring community. Also, please note that as explained in the response to Question # 6, this solicitation is not for a grant.

16. Question from potential applicant: Does collaboration with EPA have to be with NCEA, or can it be with an EPA Regional office?

EPA’s Response: Since this research is being sponsored by NCEA, it is expected that NCEA will be one of the parties substantially involved in the research. However, this is not intended to preclude the involvement of other EPA regional or headquarters offices in the research. Also, please note that the review criteria in Section 5.2.2 specifically refers to collaboration with “EPA/NCEA”.

17. Question from potential applicant: Under Section 5.2.1 Screening Questions, can you clarify what is meant by the phrase “principally benefit a non-federal institution...”?

EPA’s Response: Because this research will be conducted using a cooperative agreement, federal appropriations law requires that the principal purpose of the outputs of this research be to stimulate or support a non-federal organization with authorities or responsibilities under CERCLA or SARA (Superfund). Such a non-federal institution might include a state environmental department or local health agency. Applicants cannot focus on how their research would benefit EPA.

18. Questions from potential applicant: Under Section 5.2.2 Weighted Criteria, can you clarify what you mean by “agreement” that EPA will be substantially involved? Do we need to include a confirmation from EPA (e.g. a letter of intent) or do we simply need to convey our own willingness to collaborate with EPA?

EPA’s Response: Because Section 5.5 Communication With EPA Employees During Competition essentially prohibits EPA scientific staff from entering into any discussions with potential Applicants, it would be inappropriate to expect an Applicant to include a letter of intent from an EPA scientist. Applicants should make a good faith statement of their willingness to collaborate with EPA and, as described in Section 3.2 The EPA

Collaborative Role, “Applicants should state the extent and nature of collaboration with EPA that they desire in the proposal. The specifics of who will be involved and in what way they will collaborate will be subject to later negotiations between EPA and the Applicant once the award is made and will become part of the official work plan in the cooperative agreement.”

19. Question from potential applicant: Does Section 5.5 Communicating With EPA Employees During Competition prohibit us from asking an EPA representative for information about EPA’s past and present data collection efforts that might be the focus of our proposal?

EPA’s Response: No, as long as the request is for information that is publicly-available and that dissemination of this information would not provide the Applicant with an unfair advantage.

20. Question from potential applicant: Is there a limit on indirect costs under this RFA, or will our University’s standard federal rate apply?

EPA’s Response: Applicants may use their standard federal rate or a lower cost rate. Applicants should be aware that cost-effectiveness is one of the weighted criteria listed under Section 5.2.2. This section states in part that “Reviewers will evaluate each proposal’s merit as an investment for EPA funds. Reviewers will consider how to achieve the greatest public benefit (relative to the objectives of this solicitation) given limited EPA resources.”

21. Questions from potential applicant: Can I submit more than one application? Can I submit multiple applications from different organizations?

EPA’s Response: Yes. Each application will be evaluated separately on its own merits according to the criteria listed under Section 5.2.

22. Question from potential applicant: What is meant by “participation”? Does this include political participation?

EPA’s Response: By “participation” we mean for communities to have early, active, and continuous involvement in site cleanup activities. Examples of this are discussed in Section 3.1. While these activities might involve encouraging citizens to fully exercise their Constitutional rights to participate in the democratic process, the purpose of this RFA is not to fund partisan political activities. Further, as was stated in Section 4.1 Eligibility, “Organizations that engage in lobbying are ineligible for funding under this solicitation.”

23. Question from potential applicant: Could you direct me to any previous studies overseen by EPA that are related to the RFA title? Can you provide me with actual reports or even a bibliography?

EPA's Response: We are not aware of any previous studies conducted or overseen by EPA's Office of Research and Development that are related to risk communication and community involvement. It is because of paucity of research that we now wish to stimulate research in this important area by issuing this RFA.

Although applicants are encouraged to conduct their own literature searches, they may find it helpful to refer to Section 3.1 of the RFA which cites a report by the National Research Council that includes an entire chapter (Chapter 4 Community Involvement; pages 68-95) describing the importance of community involvement in environmental cleanup activities. This chapter also includes 3-1/2 pages of references. (Please see also the response to question # 12 for the full citation of the National Research Council report.)

24. Question from potential applicant: Does the stated amount of the award (\$100,000 to \$500,000 over one to three years) apply to each award or the total for all awards?

EPA's Response: As stated in Section 4.2 of the RFA, the total amount for all awards may range from \$100,000 to \$500,000 depending on the availability of funds. So, if for the sake of illustration, one were to assume that \$500,000 were available, then the Review Panel might select only one application valued at \$500,000 or five applications valued at \$100,000 each.

25. Question from potential applicant: Must the EPA requirement for OMB authorization to collect information be received by the time the application is submitted?

EPA's Response: No. OMB approval will be required by the selected proposals only if a survey is involved. But the request for such necessary approval would not be submitted (by EPA) until that proposal was first selected by the Review Panel.

26. Question from potential applicant: We would like to apply for assistance, but have many questions regarding the scope and range of possible projects and would like to make an appointment to speak to you by phone. When can we talk?

EPA's Response: Sorry, but in order to be fair to all applicants, it is inappropriate for us to talk to any potential applicants about the RFA. Section 5.5 of the RFA expressly prohibits any communication between EPA and potential applicants. (See also the response to question # 8.)

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27. Question from potential applicant: Should the pages of my application be single-spaced or double-spaced?

EPA's Response: Single-spaced.

28. Question from potential applicant: We do not have an indirect cost rate with EPA at this time. We do, however, have an indirect cost rate with NSF but are in the process of renegotiating it. Since your checklist says that we are supposed to submit a copy of our negotiated indirect cost rate agreement, what should we do?

EPA's Response: You do not have to submit a copy of your negotiated indirect cost agreement with your application. If your application is selected by the Review Panel for funding, then at that time (January 2003 or later) you will need to have your indirect cost rate agreement. You would not be able to bill EPA for indirect costs until this agreement is in place.

29. Question from potential applicant: We're considering submitting a proposal that would involve a training program. Would that be considered a tool and therefore be considered to be within scope of the RFA?

EPA's Response: As was explained in the response to Question # 5, it is EPA's intent to fund the eligible parties who best meet the two goals of stimulating research and developing insights, methods, tools and models that would empower communities to participate more effectively in environmental cleanups. This research may or may not involve working on or with an actual Superfund site and its neighboring community. The Review Panel will be focusing on whether the results of your proposed project would be extractable to contaminated sediment sites and their neighboring communities. Therefore, developing a training program might be a useful tool for risk communication and community involvement if it could be effectively applied to other sites around the nation. See also the responses to Questions 9, 14, and 15.

30. Question from potential applicant: Can the application be emailed to EPA by the deadline of COB September 19, 2002 and then followed by a signed copy (signed by management at my research institution) a few days later?

EPA's Response: We prefer to receive the entire application, including all signatures by COB September 19, 2002. However, we will accept the narrative proposal (via email) by itself by COB September 19, 2002. This narrative section must also include a copy of the first page of the application or a similar blank page that provides the title of your proposal, the amount of funding requested from EPA, and the name / phone numbers /

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email address of the Principal Investigator. The email address for submission is
Kelley.Dave@epa.gov.